



# Lib Dem EuroFILE



News from LDEG

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## Stronger together: Welcome to LibDem Eurofile

For years the Liberal Democrats have led the way campaigning within and for Europe. Our party has made the running on issues from the single currency to the need to reform the EU and make it work more effectively for its citizens.

LDEG has played an increasing role within the party, both in leading the debate on our European policies, and helping our campaigners to be more effective in getting our message across.

The run-up to the Euroelections this year convinced many of us that we also need to do more to get across some of the fantastic work our MEPs are doing, both as campaigners and as legislators - actually

making a concrete difference in a way impossible for most back bench MPs. EuroFILE is the result - it is intended to be a monthly newsletter featuring the pick of stories from our MEPs and other contributions from LDEG members or other leading LibDems who are making a difference at the European level.

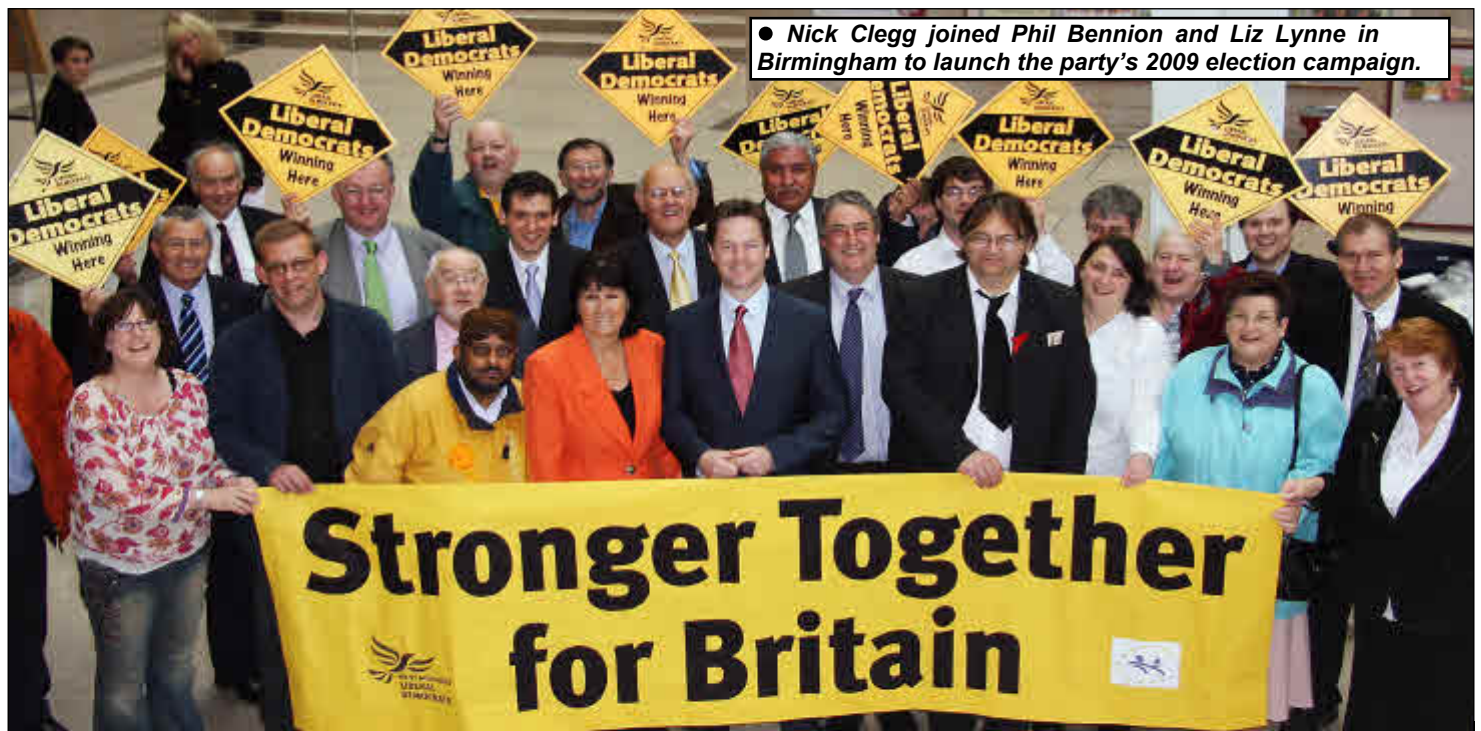
All too often, the confusion between campaigning *for* Europe as an idea and campaigning *within* European structures for our Liberal ideas and our electorate puts some local parties off, and in Focus or other media, European campaigns are absent. That isn't good for us or our ideas.

As Nick Clegg says: "we need to explain and explain again that being pro-European doesn't require people to

abandon their critical faculties. We mustn't be frightened to lead calls for change in Europe. We are keener than either Labour or the Conservatives for real change in the EU, precisely because we're committed to making the EU work."

We hope this newsletter will help campaigners across the party grasp the massive opportunities we have to show Lib Dems are working hard all year round, getting things done, fighting for real change we can believe in.

Phil Bennion



● Nick Clegg joined Phil Bennion and Liz Lynne in Birmingham to launch the party's 2009 election campaign.

### All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

# Obama warns Tories: 'stop plotting to sink EU reforms'

**Conservative plots with Polish and Czech rightwing hardliners to sink vital reforms of the EU could threaten not only European cooperation but our special relationship with the USA too, says LibDem MEP Andrew Duff.**

Andrew Duff said David Cameron's failed attempts to encourage the

eccentric rightwing Czech president Vaclav Klaus to block the reforms in the Lisbon Treaty made his party look ridiculous.

"The Tories will not be a credible governing party unless and until they drop their opposition" he said.

"It is impossible to take seriously a Conservative policy which prefers the current Treaty of Nice and the weak and rather clumsy EU we have now, to a reformed, more efficient EU which can play a credible role in world affairs."

## **Back off, Obama tells Tories**

Press releases from the Obama government in Washington show that William Hague was told that our "special relationship" with the Americans would not function unless the UK were to hold centre stage in the EU, Mr Duff added.

Such a position would be impossible with Britain under a Conservative party in a Eurosceptic fringe grouping in Europe, rather than

wielding influence in the European Parliament's largest group, the centre-right EPP.

Liberal Democrats have maintained since before the European Election that the Conservatives' cutting their links with the parties of Chancellor Merkel in Germany and President Sarkozy of France was not in our national interest. This view has now been confirmed by the Obama administration.

Mr Duff added: "The Irish people have given their decisive backing to the Lisbon treaty. The vote did credit to all those political forces in Ireland which have had to combat, over many months, the lies and distortions about the European project peddled by nationalists and europhobes - many of them British.

"Now all 27 countries have taken their own democratic decisions to back EU reform. No further delay can be tolerated in bringing the treaty into force as quickly and efficiently as possible."



## **Labour sinks Equitable Life compensation**

LibDem MEP Sharon Bowles has expressed strong disappointment that a Lib Dem motion in the House of Commons on compensating Equitable Life shareholders was defeated by 25 votes in October.

The motion, which called for the government to accept the findings of the Parliamentary Ombudsman to compensate shareholders of the Buckinghamshire-based Equitable Life, had in advance secured the support of 335 MPs from all parties. However it was defeated by 294 votes against 269.

Sharon Bowles, LibDem MEP for SouthEastern Region, chairs the powerful Economic and Monetary

Affairs Committee in Brussels. She has been helping steer through new legislation in Europe reforming insurance rules to ensure a repeat of the Equitable Life fiasco does not happen again.

In 2007 Bowles helped set up an independent inquiry into the disaster in the European Parliament. The inquiry found significant failings in the UK government's implementation of EU law designed to protect against failures like that at Equitable Life.

Sharon Bowles said: "It looks like the government whips did their job, and 294 Labour MPs voted to withhold compensation from Equitable's shareholders. This will

have been a big disappointment for those waiting years for compensation. The case remains clear, as shown by the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The government has been stalling for years. It has a moral obligation to pay up."



# Tories join Berlusconi's cronies to sabotage press freedom call

**A call by the European Parliament to stop politicians or media empires having dominant control of press or TV stations has been sabotaged by Tory Euro MPs.**

One resolution calling for an end to threats to media freedom particularly in Italy, and EU measures to stop dominant media control fell by 3 votes while an alternative failed as the vote was a dead heat.

The key role was played by 25 Tory MEPs, who voted to defend the vast network of TV stations and newspapers owned by Italian President Silvio Berlusconi, who faces trial for corruption. Their move sparked outrage from freedom campaigners.

Lib Dem European justice & human rights spokeswoman Sarah Ludford MEP said: "It's astounding that Tory MEPs used their swing votes to

block a call for freedom of the press in Italy and throughout the EU. No doubt Silvio Berlusconi is even now toasting David Cameron with a glass of bubbly."

"While east European ex-Communist countries have made much progress towards a free press, the extent of the Italian prime minister's control of private and public media would have made Erich Honecker green with envy."

"The issue of Italy's press freedom and the health of its democracy is not just a national issue, it's a European concern. Presumably Tory indifference means they also don't care about the real threats to media freedom in the UK due to libel laws and judge-made privacy laws."

"While we can hardly be surprised that UKIP and the BNP voted the

wrong way, Cameron claims the Conservatives are now "progressive" and "reformist". Is the explanation for their votes the fear that Rupert Murdoch would take umbrage and drop his newly-given support? Whatever the motivation, what the Tories did was a disgrace."



# Zero energy buildings crucial to stop climate change

**North East MEP Fiona Hall has hailed an agreement on improving the energy efficiency of buildings as vital in the battle to cut emissions which cause climate change.**

She also believes the move will help the EU to play a full role at the Copenhagen summit talks.

The Council and the European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) committee have agreed that from 2020 every new building constructed in Europe should need "nearly zero" energy for heating, cooling and lighting. The European Public Buildings Directive also concludes that all major building renovations must adhere to cost-effective energy standards.

Fiona Hall, Liberal Democrat spokesman on the directive recast said: "Today, 40% of energy consumed in Europe is used in buildings. These

*efficiency measures for new and existing buildings are arguably the biggest step that Europe will take towards meeting its carbon reduction targets.*

*"European leaders are still talking about a Copenhagen pledge to cut emissions by 30%. Without zero energy buildings and improved renovation standards, it would be impossible to reach that figure."*

"Given that only 1% of the UK's housing stock is currently considered to be energy efficient and the recession has brought a sharp rise in fuel poverty, the UK would greatly benefit from a concerted effort to tackle the energy problems of its current housing stock. This is particularly true for the North East where one in four social houses have been classified as 'indecent' by the Government's own standards."

**All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# Nightmare of EU 'President Blair' was a mirage

**The Liberal Democrats were the first major political party to oppose the nomination of Tony Blair as President of the European Council.**

**LibDem MEPs warned that giving him this key job - though not equivalent to a head of state - would be a disastrous mistake.**

The prospect was seized upon by the eurosceptic British press, who thought nothing of presenting the post as a full blown head of state.

The post was chosen by the 27 EU governments, not the European Parliament, though MEPs debated the issue at the October plenary session in Strasbourg. West Midlands MEP Liz Lynne said; "An illegal war, complicity in torture and a peculiar relationship with truth all meant Tony Blair was the last person who should be chosen.

"As well as dishonestly taking us to an illegal war over fictitious weapons of mass destruction, serious questions remain regarding Tony Blair's collusion with the Bush administration over extraordinary rendition and torture. The police are investigating what role MI5 and MI6 had with this process and what they were ordered to do by our then Prime Minister.

"A full time President of the Council of Ministers is a good idea but it is not about creating a

new head of state. We need a collegiate public servant in this job, not a demi dictator who only listens to his own very peculiar conscience."

"The new post is part of reforms to streamline the enlarged EU and make the Council of Ministers work more efficiently, not to be a European Government."

Scotland's LibDem MEP George Lyon said the signature of the Blair years was the way he blindly dragged us to war in Iraq, in defiance of advice and the facts.

He said: "While Prime Minister, in taking us to war Blair rode roughshod over our European neighbours who warned against it, angered Muslim nations who feared

it, and circumvented the UN that tried to avert it.

"This is hardly the C.V. of a man you want to extend the European Union's influence in the world.

"He is recognised, but for all the wrong reasons. Add to that continuing questions over Mr Blair's role in British complicity in the use of torture and you have a recipe for revulsion.

"Blair's candidacy was a parting shot from a Labour party destined to defeat. Party insiders were pushing for the Presidency, not because they believed Blair to be the best candidate, but because they calculated that it will offer some consolation after their inevitable collapse at the next General Election."



# Watson fury at BNP plan to hand Gibraltar to Spain



*Graham Watson MEP addressing a rally in Gibraltar on their national day.*

**BNP Leader Nick Griffin has sparked furious criticism after he told a rally of Spanish fascists that the BNP would hand Gibraltar to Spain - against the wishes of nearly all its 30,000 inhabitants.**

Griffin hoped to make a quiet sop to Spanish extremists, but was exposed by anti-BNP campaigners. South West Lib Dem MEP Graham Watson also represents Gibraltar in the European Parliament and was angered by Griffin's comments.

He said: "Griffin's words show the complete lack of respect that the BNP hold towards freedom and democracy.

"Far from defending the British people, he has shown that his party would betray the trust of thousands in order to please his fascist friends.

"As long as the people of Gibraltar wish to remain British citizens, they should be guaranteed protection by the British government. The BNP may wish abandon British subjects, but I never will."

## EU top jobs - the real work begins now, say LibDems

**The appointment of Herman van Rompuy as President of the European Council and the UK's Baroness Cathy Ashton as foreign policy chief means the real work of making the enlarged EU more efficient can at last begin, say LibDem MEPs.**

Lib Dem Constitutional Affairs spokesman **Andrew Duff MEP** said: "This deal will strengthen Commission President Barroso and put him at the top of the tree. The choice is not very exciting but will bring stability and clarity to the new roles envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty."

Delegation leader **Fiona Hall MEP** added: "Mr van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton might not be well known, but at least we have one man and one woman in the two posts. Now that the top jobs have been appointed, the real work must

begin. Baroness Ashton will need all the negotiating skills she has developed in the House of Lords and as Trade Commissioner."

London MEP **Sarah Ludford** said: "The British tabloid press' almost racist targeting of Herman van Rompuy for being Belgian just exposed their ignorance and prejudice. Eurosceptics can hardly complain that they will adopt a low-key consensual approach instead of a 'traffic-stopping' one. Ashton's comment that she is not an 'ego on legs' highlights the importance of high profile policy substance over personality in the EU role on the international stage."

"But the haggling and horsetrading method of appointment has not done the EU any credit. A better way must be found in future than this secret cabal."

**All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# Bill Newton Dunn's quick guide: What Lisbon means in practice -

*A handy guide by Bill Newton Dunn MEP:*

**When the Lisbon Treaty comes into effect on the 1st December, it will radically improve the way the EU of 27 nations operates.**

a. There will be no "President of Europe", a concept invented by the media and by euro-sceptics to alarm the public and to sell newspapers. The Council of Ministers will have a president for two and a half years who will provide much-needed continuity (against the habit of rotating the presidency every six months).

b. More democratic control as the European Parliament, representing the people, takes a full half-share control of all legislation. See <http://euobserver.com/9/29036/?rk=1> And the other chamber, the Council, representing the 27 governments, must hold its meetings in public from now on and taking more votes by majority voting.

c. The way the Council President, and the "Foreign Minister" or High Representative were chosen reveals how continental politics works (which is not understood by those used to a winner-takes-all system as in the UK). The Christian-Democrats (CDs) got first pick because they are the largest party across the EU. They wanted someone from a small state who would not overshadow Merkel or Sarkozy - hence the Belgian Van Rompuy. The Christian-Democrats now also have the current presidents of the Parliament



(Polish Busek) and of the Commission (Portuguese Barroso).

Second in line were the Socialists who could choose the Foreign Minister: they conferred amongst themselves and compromised on Cathy Ashton from the UK. The Liberals, the third party across Europe, will get a higher than justified number of the 27 new Commissioners. The euro-sceptic parties get nothing. The UK Conservatives, having quit their alliance with the CDs, have excluded themselves from any EU power for years until they come to their senses.

d. The 27 new Commissioners will be democratically accountable. They have been nominated, one from each member state, and portfolios allocated to them by Barroso. Between 11 and 19 January, each will be subjected to a public live on-the-stand three hour interrogation before a European Parliament committee. Then the full parliament will, or not, vote each of them into office until 2014 (but can cause any of them to be dismissed later if they lose the confidence of a majority of MEPs).

e. The EU's External Action Service will be developed. It means EU representative offices throughout the world. This will, eventually, save a lot of money for taxpayers, because the current arrangement of 27 separate European embassies in every world capital but speaking with only one voice (the current Council presidency) is wasteful.

## **New Commission brings Liberal Policies; Tories sidelined**

**The announcement of Commission President Barroso's proposed new EU Commissioners has been welcomed as a boost for Liberal Democrat policies in Europe and a confirmation of the UK Conservatives' self imposed exile to the lunatic fringe.**

Eight of the 27 nominees are from Liberal Democrat parties, four men and four women. The new ultra right wing group formed by the UK Tories has none.

**Andrew Duff MEP** (East of England), Lib Dem European Spokesman on Constitutional Affairs said:

*"I am delighted that Liberals and Democrats have been given eight Commission posts - including the*

*key portfolio of Economic and Monetary Affairs (Olli Rehn - Finland).*

*"At a time of economic crisis, we need Liberal policies to help the UK and all of Europe to return to robust growth."*

**Fiona Hall MEP** (North East of England), Leader of the Liberal Democrat MEPs added:

*"Liberal Democrats have campaigned on three key priority areas for Europe: the economy, the environment and crime and civil liberties. The new European Commission gives all these portfolios to Liberal Democrat parties, and we look forward to Liberal solutions to Europe's problems."*

*"By contrast, the Cameron Conservatives' breakaway fringe group has been given nothing at all and remains at the sidelines, impotent and ignored."*

# Time to kickstart the European Economy

**Lib Dem leader Guy Verhofstadt says free trade and investment in low carbon technology are vital.**

The EU Commission must come up with a concerted plan to kickstart the European economy following the global financial crisis. That is the view of **Guy Verhofstadt**, leader of the Liberal and Democrat group in the European Parliament, endorsed by delegates at the ELDR Congress in Barcelona.

Mr Verhofstadt described how the left have called for a retreat into socialism



and both conservatives and socialists have looked to protectionist policies. But the leader of the third largest group in the Parliament said that only a plan based on liberal principles would be effective. The main business of the Congress was to outline this liberal response to the economic crisis and to map out a plan for recovery.

The European Liberals called for:

- Maintaining free and open markets and rejecting protectionism
- Completing the European Single Market to increase competition across the EU
- Increased investment in research, innovation and development
- The return of nationalised banks to the private sector on appropriate timescales
- Cuts to administrative burdens on business
- The EU to assure secure and sustainable energy supplies

- Investment in a low carbon economy and the environment
- Improved regulation of the finance sector at a European level with a particular focus on cross-border activities and co-ordinating national regulators
- Reining in public deficits and ending the relaxations in the stability and growth pact to prevent excessive public debt acting as a break on economic growth

ELDR also re-affirmed its support for both empowerment through education and the continuance of strong social protection systems, although the latter should focus more on stimulating the capability of recipients to develop a greater level of independence.

With a new Commission about to take office the importance of the ALDE group (European Liberals) uniting behind a coherent plan cannot be overestimated. It is unlikely that either the Conservative group (EPP) or the Socialists will be as united or organised.

**Guy Verhofstadt, Liberal and Democrat group leader in the European Parliament, has welcomed the announcement by President Barroso that Liberal commissioners will be assigned a number of key portfolios in the new Commission.**

He said the Liberal group will play a key role in EU policy in the next five years: *"I am satisfied that President Barroso is putting his trust in the Liberal commissioners in so many important areas which will be vital in the months ahead to pull Europe out of recession and improve prospects in the job market."*

*"Liberals have proven their worth in the past and will undoubtedly do so again in the next five years."*

*"Liberals in both the Commission and Parliament will work hard to ensure a coherent, principled and pro-European approach is always upheld and that the Community method takes precedence over nationalism or intergovernmentalism."*

*"Finally I am delighted that Liberals remained true to their commitment to gender balance in the selection of commissioners. At the end of the day actions speak louder than words and President Barroso can be pleased that he has both high quality and an even balance of men and women amongst the Liberal colleagues in his new team."*

## **The Liberal commissioners and portfolios:**

**Siim Kallas (Vice President):** Transport;  
**Neelie Kroes (Vice President):** Digital agenda;  
**Máire Geoghegan Quinn:** Research, science & innovation;  
**Karel De Gucht:** Trade;  
**Cecilia Malmström:** Home affairs;  
**Janez Potocnik:** Environment;  
**Olli Rehn:** Economic/monetary affairs;  
**Androulla Vassiliou:** Education & culture, multilingualism and youth.

**All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# Commission must act to stop return of foot and mouth - LYON

**Liberal Democrat MEP George Lyon (Scotland) has warned the European Commission that it must do more to stop a new outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Europe.**

Lyon, Lib Dem European Spokesman on Agriculture, spoke in response to a statement in the European Parliament on meat imports from third countries by Health Commissioner, Androulla Vassiliou.

The statement follows a report based on inspections carried out in Brazil by the Food and Veterinary Office which found that Brazilian meat export standards fell far short of EU requirements.

George Lyon warned: "Brazil has made some improvements to the traceability of meat, but it's still falling short of the standards that British consumers should expect.

"Foot and mouth disease is still present there, and it is vital that EU authorities insist Brazil fully implements the control measures that are necessary to prevent any threat of the disease spreading here.

**"Taxpayers had to shell out £4 billion for the UK's 2001 outbreak, and farmers were forced to slaughter and burn over ten million animals.**

"It is not acceptable for the Commission to bury its head in the sand.

"It must carry out another inspection in Brazil

as soon as possible, it must insist that the failures identified are rectified as soon as possible, and it must guarantee that Brazil - and all other exporting countries - measure up to EU standards.

"The apocalyptic scenes of 2001 must never be repeated.

"Farmers, taxpayers and consumers have a right to better protection than this."



## **Dairy farmers need real help right now, say LibDem MEPs**

George Lyon MEP, Lib Dem agriculture spokesperson in the European Parliament has welcomed millions of pounds of extra investment from the EU in Britain's dairy sector. MEPs voted for an extra £250 million for hard pressed dairy farmers and for emergency powers to be granted to the Commission so the funds can be paid out as quickly as possible.

The European Agriculture Commissioner Marion Fischer Boel argued for the emergency powers as the best way to get the new funds to farmers without delay. She suggested in the debate that she was hoping the money could be paid by Christmas provided it was agreed by Finance Ministers.

Commenting, George Lyon said: "I am pleased the European Parliament has backed the

Commissioner's proposal for emergency powers. This will enable us to ensure that funds are paid out as soon as possible.

"This small funding boost could make a big difference to dairy farmers who have been hit hardest by the huge drop in the milk price over the last year. It is now up to the Government and devolved administrations to come up with a scheme that targets those producers who are in a real crisis situation.

"I don't want to see this money frittered away or held up in Government bank accounts for months on end. Ministers must agree plans with the industry on how to get this cash to the dairy farmers who really need it as quickly as possible."

Liberal Democrats have for a long time now called for an independent supermarket regulator to look at supermarket domination and the effect this is having on our farmers in particular."

# Regional Eurostar could run now, says Liz Lynne MEP

**A surprise rise in business travel on Eurostar high speed trains to Paris and Brussels means a direct service to the regions should be reconsidered, says LibDem MEP Liz Lynne.**

Eurostar announced that sales rose by 6.8% compared with the same July to September period last year. 2.6 million passengers used the service during the quarter, against 2.4 million a year ago.

Now Lib Dem MEP Liz Lynne has urged Eurostar bosses to run trains direct from Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool to the Channel Tunnel as a commercial proposition.

Liz Lynne was re-elected to a third term as a West Midlands MEP in June. She has long campaigned for Birmingham and the region to have better transport links.

She said: "Birmingham and the West Midlands need a direct Eurostar link, and need it now. We can't afford to wait another ten years for the north of London high speed route. But we don't need to.

"When I first became an MEP there were plans for a Eurostar service from Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Rugby via the Tunnel to Brussels. The trains were built, the service was even in the 1999 timetable, but it never ran.

"Ten years on things have changed, there are massive environmental reasons for shifting traffic from air to rail. But there is also now a new high speed link from St Pancras to Paris and Brussels. It would be easy to run a three hour service from Birmingham International direct to Brussels using the existing West Coast main line to London.

"It would be nice if this could be supported by government as the

regional service was promised to Parliament when the Channel Tunnel was built. But this good news shows there are realistic grounds for thinking Eurostar could run regional services as a fully commercial operation, I am sure Birmingham businesses and the Council would bend over backwards to help them."

Liz Lynne has written to both Eurostar bosses and Transport Secretary Lord Adonis asking them to look into the plans.

"Even without the dedicated high speed route that we all want to see, a through Eurostar service to Birmingham could compete directly with short haul airline services and divert traffic from air to rail, with huge savings in carbon emissions.

"I would certainly use such a service and so would the growing numbers of business people and leisure travellers forced to use short-haul flights instead of surface transport."



**All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# EU carbon capture plan points to a green future for coal industry - Chris Davies

**LibDem Euro MPs have welcomed a plan by the European Commission to spend a billion pounds on seven full scale carbon capture and storage schemes for coal power stations around Europe - including one UK powerplant at Hatfield in Humberside.**

The trial projects to trap carbon emissions at power stations would involve funding of up to £160m at each plant from a £1 billion budget as part of the EU's economic recovery programme.

Legislation allowing for the plan has been strongly supported by Liberal Democrat Euro MPs in the European Parliament. Carbon capture and storage (or CCS) involves extracting CO2 from a coal or oil power station chimneys and pumping it deep underground for permanent storage in rocks which used to contain oil or natural gas.

North west LibDem MEP and environment spokesman **Chris Davies** helped to steer carbon capture and storage legislation through the European Parliament last year and has been a longstanding campaigner for a full scale trial of the technology.

He said: "This huge EU sponsored project is a vital step forward. Coal will be used to generate electricity for many decades to come, but it will be coal with the CO2 removed and buried permanently in rocks beneath the North Sea."

The Hatfield plant is at the core of a proposed 'Humber Cluster' of CCS projects that within 15 years could prevent the emission into the atmosphere of up to 70 million tonnes of CO2.

Coal and gas power stations are responsible for 40% of all Europe's CO2 emissions, and with the use of both increasing many experts believe that without CCS it will be im-

possible to curb global warming. However, although the technology has been proven in pilot projects it has never been demonstrated on the scale necessary if all the hopes for it are to be realised.



## LibDem MEPs launch new bid to fight modern day slavery

**LibDem Euro MPs Liz Lynne and Catherine Bearder are calling for the European Union and Member States to step up action against human trafficking gangs and more help to protect the victims of modern-day slavery.**

A Parliamentary declaration co sponsored by Liz Lynne and signed by Catherine Bearder is calling for member states to allow victims of trafficking gangs or forced labour to have access to temporary residence permits while they rebuild their lives and see if they can help police prosecute the criminals who exploited them.

The declaration also urges all EU countries to sign up and ratify the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking of Human Beings.

The UN estimates there are 12.3 million people worldwide categorised as modern slaves, with up to 800,000 trafficked across borders each year. Between 1,000 and 4,000 people are believed to be trafficked into Britain annually for prostitution or forced labour.

A longstanding campaigner to abolish slavery and trafficking, South East MEP **Catherine Bearder** said:

"That people across the world are still kept as slaves is a stain on our global society. Men, women and children are incarcerated in slave labour, and many women, and children too, are forced into prostitution to make money for criminals that think they own them.

"Here in the UK there is not just a problem of people being trafficked into our country but also being trafficked within it. Children are being moved around both urban and rural areas across the whole country for the benefit of their abusers."

"The UK has signed and ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, though some EU states have not. However, Britain has signed but failed to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse."

Liz Lynne and Catherine Bearder have also both spoken out against plans by the Metropolitan police to break up it's specialist human trafficking team, which has been involved in raids around the country against suspected traffickers.

# ELDR Congress backs 30% CO2 cuts in run-up to Copenhagen

**European Liberals can enter the Copenhagen climate change talks united behind a commitment to cut EU CO2 emissions by 30% from 1990 levels by 2020.**

This should be matched by cuts of between 25 and 40% by all other developed countries if we are to keep global warming below 2 degrees C. The Chinese have just announced a negotiating position which includes substantial cuts in carbon intensity at 45%, but the Americans are still behind the game with President Obama suggesting only 17% cuts on a 2005 base.

"It was good to see all the hands go up in favour of the resolution considering that three very different resolutions came to Congress" said Eurofile editor and Congress delegate **Phil Bennion**.

"Julie Smith and I had just a couple of hours to hammer out an agreed form of words with the Swedes before the vote on the amendments. The VVD of the Netherlands wanted all the targets made conditional on an agreement in Copenhagen, which the pundits now deem unlikely.

"Having lost that argument they came on board and supported the resolution. Most of the original Lib Dem resolution adapted from the

one we passed at Bournemouth in September survived the process and thanks must go to the hard work of Simon Hughes, Julie Smith and Jo Hayes in taking this to the European stage."

A separate resolution on Agriculture and Climate Change largely drafted by Phil Bennion was also passed with just a couple of minor amendments from our hosts and Catalan sister party, Convergencia. Phil had come hot-foot from Morocco where he had been speaking at a conference on this issue organised by Agadir University.

## **Climate change in North Africa**

Phil said: "Climate change has already taken place in North Africa and farming in some areas is becoming increasingly difficult. In the south of Morocco temperatures have risen and rainfall fallen, as has snowfall on the Atlas Mountains that provides irrigation water when it melts. Many farmers are questioning the continued viability of working their land. I am convinced that urgent action is required."

"Reducing the carbon intensity of food is fraught with difficulty and needs careful treatment" continued Dr Bennion. "Slam targets on individual farmers and they can easily meet them by cutting fertiliser inputs. The problem being that

lower yields would mean that more land would be needed to grow the same amount of food and the only new land available is rain forest. Our resolution called for a more sophisticated approach based on a combination of technological advance and the protection of important carbon sinks."

MEPs Fiona Hall and Chris Davies will represent the Lib Dems in Copenhagen and they will be able to take forward a comprehensive programme with the full backing of our European sister parties. We must still be hopeful that an agreement will be reached, but if not, much can still be gained. The Chinese and Americans are at least bringing figures to the table and taking the issue seriously.



## **ELDR says No to Big Brother**

European Liberals and Democrats reacted strongly against state intrusion and made a clear commitment to defending civil rights at their Barcelona congress in November.

ELDR called for the storage of the electronic communications data of individuals (currently being forced upon internet service providers) to be abandoned, and only allowed in individual cases under judicial supervision.

This would require the abolition of the EU Data Retention Directive, as well as some measures adopted in member states.

Congress also opposed any agreements allowing third countries access to EU banking data through systems such as SWIFT, opposed internet censorship other than where criminals abuse individuals and proposed that law enforcement should be improved through training and professionalism rather than mass surveillance.

**All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# Ludford welcomes EU action over UK online privacy failures

The European Commission is taking legal enforcement action against the UK government for its failure to fully implement EU law regarding online privacy. The action could result in a judgment in the EU court, the European Court of Justice, and a fine.

The EU's 2002 'e-privacy' directive guarantees confidentiality of electronic communications such as emails and internet surfing. The Commission received complaints that UK telecoms firms were unlawfully monitoring and profiling users' internet use in order to allow targeted 'behavioural' ads to be sent eg by Phorm, and that it was impossible to get action from UK authorities.

London Liberal Democrat MEP **Sarah Ludford**, the party's European justice & human rights spokeswoman, said:

"This move endorses the criticism of Liberal Democrats and campaigners of the government's lax attitude towards data protection and their slide towards mass surveillance."

"We have long said that RIPA is a snoopers' charter for police and local authorities. But even more generosity has been shown to commercial

firms who want to make money out of invading our privacy."

"It is shameful though welcome that Brussels has had to ride to the rescue as British bodies including our data watchdog the Information Commissioner are apparently powerless to help."

After warning the British government, the European Commission is not satisfied with response and has identified three particular shortcomings in the British regulations:

i) There is no independent national authority to supervise the interception of communications and to hear complaints about interceptions.

ii) Communications can be intercepted when there are "reasonable grounds for believing" that consent has been given, rather than the stricter European rule which requires "freely given specific and informed indication of a person's wishes."

iii) Under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), unlawful interception of communications is only punished if intentional. Under European law, the government has a duty to sanction unlawful interception regardless of whether or not it was intentional.

## 'Nasty' Tories would choke off climate change aid - Hall

David Cameron's Tory MEPs have launched a last minute attempt to scupper the EU's Copenhagen position of arguing for climate change aid for developing countries.

In a European Parliament debate on the EU strategy for the



Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change, Tory MEP Martin Callanan tabled an amendment that would have removed the EU-wide commitment to provide "new and

additional" money for funding mitigation and adaptation measures for the developing countries suffering from man-made climate change. The amendment was massively defeated by 33 votes to 638.

In a separate amendment, the Conservatives also opposed the Parliament's long-standing position that part of the money raised by the European Emissions Trading Scheme should be earmarked for developing countries' climate change needs. This was defeated by 78 votes to 588.

**Fiona Hall MEP**, Leader of the Liberal Democrat MEPs, who will be attending the Copenhagen conference said: "The Tory mask has slipped, revealing that

underneath they are still the nasty party. The developing world emits a tiny fraction of global carbon but bears the worst impact of climate change. We need additional money to deal with a growing problem.

"It won't do to take funds from existing overseas aid budgets. Robbing Peter to pay Paul will cost lives.

"It is disgraceful that the Tories are trying to duck out of this responsibility. What happened to their claimed commitment to the environment, and to the developing world?

"MEPs voted against this mean-spirited effort to short-change the world's poorest: frankly the Tories should be ashamed of themselves."



# Lib Dem EuroFILE



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[www.ldeg.org](http://www.ldeg.org)

Editor: Phil Bennion

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